

Rural District of Winslow.

Medical Officer of Health's Report.

1902.

EDWIN J. FRENCH, PRINTER, WINSLOW.

Medical Officer of Health's Report to the Winslow Rural Sanitary Authority.

Winslow, February, 1903.

GENTLEMEN,

I will first of all refer to the Tables presented to you. The mortality was the smallest on record, namely 95; it has never been below 100 before, ten years ago it was 152, and it has been higher than that. The Births were also the smallest on record, viz. 148, the average for ten years being 188. Whilst requiring elaborate calculations to obtain the averages and percentages, yet the rates cannot be absolutely correct, as the population necessarily varies between each census and there is no other means of estimating their number. The death-rate was 14.5 per 1,000, and the birth-rate 21. The infant mortality was 18, the average being 20. Diphtheria accounted for eleven deaths. Five died from Whooping Cough. Heart Disease was responsible for eleven. In Table III, you will see we have had 46 cases of Infections Disease, just double the number of last year (1901); the increase is owing to the epidemic of Diphtheria at Stewkley and Drayton, in all there were 35 cases, two mild idiopathic Erysipelatous patients, and eight Scarlatina, none of which were serious, make up the list. As usual no Typhoid was reported. I shall enter into particulars of the Zymotic outbreaks and first let me begin with—

Diphtheria.—In a family at Wigwell, Great Horwood, three children were taken ill in January. The cottage was in a wretched state, with scarcely any furniture and the inmates poverty stricken. No particular insanitary condition existed in the neighbourhood, and no further extension of the disease took place. The Clinical Research Society found true Löffler Bacillus in the specimen sent. The most serious outbreak of this disease however occurred at Drayton and Stewkley, two villages adjoining each other. The first case took place in Drayton in September, and was fatal, another case was affected soon after in a house in which seven or eight other children lived; the family followed out implicitly every order as to precaution given, with the result that the the rest escaped infection. In Love Row, on the other hand, every child in the family contracted the disease, as well as the mother, and two died. At the same time cases were breaking out at Stewkley in various parts of the Village. The Schools were inspected by myself and the Inspector, and as reported at the time, we found nothing of an insanitary nature; they were closed, and have been to this date, February, 1903. Stewkley is a long straggling Village of fourteen hundred inhabitants, with many small yards, pigstyes and farms. Had the children been brought together at the Schools probably few would have escaped infection, as it was the disease should have terminated in November, but a recrudescence occurred then owing to gross carelessness and ignorance, or something worse; children were allowed to play about in the streets by their parents, even from infected houses; they even saw the dead body's corpse, followed the funerals, and old women were gossiping about from house to house, whether infected or free. All this you know from previous reports, also the precautions taken, the public notices put up warning people against contamination, and the engagement of a trained nurse whom you lodged in the Village and whose services you paid for months. Many pigstyes were condemned and the pigs cleared, closets put in better order and ash pits cleared out. The removal of hundreds of pigs has caused much feeling and engendered some abuse to the Inspector and myself. The cottager's pig is a help to his larder and his income, but the individual must give way to the community, moreover it was men who owned many animals who gave the greatest opposition, and caused most trouble. After the disease had apparently terminated, one family a month after became ill and two died; they owned a dog which was very thin and ill when I saw it and this dog had been raking over an ash heap in which garbage and poultices of a family who had lost two children, had been flung. This dog was accustomed to lick the children as dogs will do sometimes, and I have no doubt that this was the cause of their infection. The dog may have had Diphtheria, at any rate he carried the infection. As has often been before observed Scarlatina and Diphtheria have some affinity for each other, and in an epidemic one often follows the other. It did in this outbreak, and in all some six Scarlatina cases followed on the convalescence of the Diphtherial patients. It was curious, as a mile or more separated some of the patients' homes and the Schools were closed, how the Scarlatina was carried.

There was one case of Scarlatina at Great Horwood, in a child attending the Public Schools, the origin of which could not be traced ; there was no spread of the disease amongst the child's playmates,

Another case occurred in Swanbourne, in a two-years-old child : no other source of infection could be ascertained than the fact that Scarlatina existed in the woman's family in London.

We had a scare of Smallpox, but so far we have escaped, though any moment a tramp may bring it to the District. When the Volunteers at Aylesbury broke up their camp, as one of their number had Smallpox, his companions in the tent where he had slept, not unnaturally thought it inadvisable to return to their families, so they pitched their tents in a field at Whaddon, to wait until the incubation period of Smallpox had elapsed. I was requested by the Sanitary Authority to visit them with the Inspector, which I did on three or four occasions, and they departed after sufficient quarantine in perfect health.

Whooping Cough was prevalent during part of the year and caused five deaths. This disease and Measles are accountable for more deaths in the Kingdom than the so-called serious Zymotic Diseases. The reason is of course that they are so much prevalent, few children escaping.

The large number of Zymotic Diseases certified is unusual, but we must bear in mind that the number has hitherto been small and it is only relatively large compared with former years. We shall probably never be entirely free, though our hopes and endeavours must be in that direction.

New public drainage is contemplated at Whaddon, and some further extension at Stewkley. The Winslow Sewage Scheme is still *sub judice*. In common with many parts of the Country, Winslow and some of the Villages have been short of water. If we do not have a much greater rainfall before the summer, the outlook will be serious.

Not much new building has been done during the year, indeed there is no inducement to put up new cottages in country districts ; consequently, year by year the houses tend to become older and more dilapidated.

One prosecution was undertaken against the owner of two cottages, with the result that he was fined and had to pay costs, and afterwards repair the cottages, so that he gained little by being contumacious. As you have had fortnightly reports of other minor matters noticed in my inspections of the district during the year, I need not further refer to them.

I remain,

Your obedient Servant,

T. F. VAISEY.

